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DATE 9/20/85

DOC NO NESAM 85-10/89

OCR CYS 2

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Central Intelligence Agency

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Washington, D. C. 20505

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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

17 September 1985

Afghanistan: Limits to US Pressure for Resistance Unity

Summary

A low US profile is essential to the success of efforts to foster resistance unity and generate international support for the Afghan cause. With the proper balance of Pakistani and US guidance and an atmosphere conducive to the alliance reaching its own decisions, the alliance has a fair chance of evolving gradually into a mechanism for better focusing international political attention on the Afghan issue and improving military cooperation among insurgent groups.

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Alliance Tensions and the US Role

Like the shaky, shifting alliances that preceded it, the Ittihad Islami suffers from ethnic, tribal, and religious differences and the conflicting ambitions of several leaders. Although alliance members welcome US aid, the nature of the US political role is a source of friction.

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Alliance groups led by Gailani, Mojadedi, and Nabi--which are linked with the former Afghan ruling classes and the West--favor a stronger US political role. The fundamentalists--led by

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[redacted]

Gulbuddin, Khalis, Rabbani, and Sayyaf--who desire an Islamic republic in Afghanistan, tend to be anti-Western as well as anti-Communist. They are the strongest forces in the resistance. Some fundamentalists are probably in accord with the views of Gulbuddin, who has publicly stated his belief that the US is involved in aiding the resistance primarily to gain influence and prevent establishment of an Iranian-style republic in Afghanistan. [redacted]

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[redacted] Another influential fundamentalist leader, Abdul Rasoul Sayyaf, also often takes a publicly anti-Western stance. If Islamic fundamentalists come to agree that the alliance is a US tool, Sayyaf, Gulbuddin, and perhaps others are likely to opt out. Even more moderate Peshawar exile leaders would see strong US involvement as undercutting their efforts to rebut charges that they are pawns of the US. [redacted]

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US leverage can best be exerted through third parties. Pressure from Pakistan is acceptable to the insurgents generally, and many US objectives probably can be best effected through Pakistan. In order to foster the legitimacy of the alliance, the US probably will have to avoid direct involvement in the alliance's decision-making process and in other resistance activities likely to draw media attention. Because anti-US rhetoric from resistance leaders like Gulbuddin provides the alliance with an aura of independence, it might be wise for the US to promote such criticism occasionally and quietly. [redacted]

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Pakistani Concerns

President Zia welcomes insurgent pressure on the Soviets and wishes to maintain a good relationship with the US, but Islamabad has its own fears about a too visible US role. The US Embassy in Islamabad recently noted indications of Pakistani unhappiness about US contacts with resistance leaders and the US effort to have a resistance delegation attend this fall's UNGA session.

- Islamabad fears that widespread perception of the Afghan struggle as an East-West issue would link Pakistan too openly with the West and lead to increased Soviet military and political pressure.
- Islamabad does not want to see an insurgent alliance become too potent a military and political force because it fears such a force might be subject to manipulation by Pakistani opposition parties and factions.
- Islamabad also is concerned that the Saudis may seek to dominate the resistance council. A strong Saudi hand in the fundamentalist alliance during 1983 and 1984 intensified rivalries among resistance groups.

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[REDACTED]

-- Pakistan may believe that an increased role by the US or Saudi Arabia in the new alliance would lead the Iranians to introduce complications for the insurgency. Iranian officials at various times have hampered operations and resupply for some Sunni insurgent groups because they had Saudi backing. [REDACTED]

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The UN Angle

If the alliance establishes an office in New York and UN members generally view it as a US tool, outside pressure--best applied by Pakistan--would be essential to ensure the selection of a capable, unified delegation to advance alliance interests. A fractious delegation would discredit the resistance. A delegation closely linked with the US would alienate some Third World countries, such as Iran, and we believe the annual resolution calling for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan would lose support. [REDACTED]

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Use of intermediaries to persuade Iran or Turkey to help an Afghan resistance delegation establish political and media contacts would provide proper distance from the US. [REDACTED]

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SUBJECT: Afghanistan: Limits to US Pressure for Resistance
Unity

DDI/NESA/SO/P [] (17 September 1985)

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